

breaks from the cookie cutter, straight out of the box education of the past and recognizes that America can and must remain a global leader.

Mr. Speaker, career and technical education serves to ensure that we continue on that path.

#### NO AMERICAN WOMAN SHOULD BE DENIED CONTRACEPTIVE COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. One of the many things I love about America is we are a country of second chances. You can fail and still have a chance to get ahead in our Nation of opportunity. There was a time that it looked like Steve Jobs might not make it. He was forced out of his company, and Apple looked like it might become a historical footnote—until Apple realized its mistake and asked Steve Jobs to return and put him back on top.

Our current basketball sensation, Jeremy Lin, knows a thing or two about second chances. He was undrafted by the NBA, and he was cut twice before landing with the New York Knicks. Other than my hometown Chicago Bulls hero, Derrick Rose, Lin is the most exciting story in sports. America is about second and third and fourth chances, which brings me, of course, to Newt Gingrich.

Now, some might say that Newt being considered at all for President of the United States is a second chance. After all, his reign as Speaker of the House did not end well. It didn't end with good policy for America, good politics for Republicans, or good feelings about his personal reputation. Yet, he's hanging in there in the race for Commander in Chief. Now that's a second chance I'm talking about today.

I'm talking about Newt Gingrich's reaction to President Obama's effort to provide contraceptive coverage to all American women. Mr. Gingrich has been trumpeting his outrage, from "Meet the Press" to CPAC to any town hall meeting that will have him. He said: "President Obama has basically declared war on the Catholic Church."

To be clear: "President Obama has basically declared war on the Catholic Church."

That's the second chance I want to talk about this morning, Newt Gingrich as spokesperson for the Catholic Church. Newt Gingrich as the right man to stand up as a protector of the values of the Catholic faith.

If Newt Gingrich, Catholic spokesperson, is not a generous, forgiving second chance, then I don't think one has ever existed in America.

Now, I'm Catholic. And as a pro-choice legislator who strongly believes that no American woman should be denied contraceptive coverage based on where she works, I don't always see eye to eye with my church, so I don't pretend to be a spokesman or someone

who can speak for all Catholics. Good people can disagree on tough issues.

But apparently Newt Gingrich is well-positioned to decide when our President has declared "war" on the Catholic faith. He isn't reluctant to speak on their behalf, even with a personal history that seems to be at odds with some of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Frankly, I think his personal life is none of our business, but when he wants to dictate morality to the rest of America, when he accuses our President of engaging in "religious persecution," when he demands that his personal values be shared by all American women, he makes his personal life part of the public discourse.

I support the President's call for equity for all American women. I salute him for standing up for fairness in contraceptive coverage in all health care plans. I support the President's effort to find a compromise that respects every American's religious beliefs. He did something hard for a leader. He listened to his critics, he worked to find common ground, moderate ground, and he changed. And I applaud him for that.

And I applaud the American people for reminding us that everybody gets a second chance, even a chance for Newt Gingrich to stand up for American Catholics. If Newt Gingrich can speak for American Catholics, then it's true: in America, anything is possible.

Just consider what could happen. Maybe Charlie Sheen can become the spokesperson for the temperance movement. Lou Dobbs can be the face of immigrant rights. LeBron James can be in charge of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce. And the cast of Jersey Shore can lead a national campaign for manners, humility, and modesty.

If Newt Gingrich can do it, why can't they? In fact, if Newt Gingrich can do it, why can't I?

This is me with Senator Bill Bradley. He's over 6 foot 6, and I'm barely 5 foot 6. He has noticed the difference, and he is giving me a friendly kiss on the top of my head. So I'm pleased to announce today that if Newt Gingrich can speak for all Catholics, I'm going to start speaking for all tall people.

That's right. Five-foot-six Congressman LUIS GUTIERREZ, president of the National Association of Extremely Tall Americans. I'm no expert on being tall. But then again, Newt doesn't really seem to be an expert on the rules of the Catholic Church either, so what's going to stop me?

#### ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, Tony Blair was the Prime Minister of Great Britain and was considered to be a political liberal, and perhaps his actions didn't always match his words, but I would like to

read a statement he made at one point. Mr. Blair said:

The role of government is to stabilize and then get out of the way as quickly as possible. Ultimately, the recovery will be led not by the government but by industry, business, and the creativity, ingenuity, and enterprise of people. If the measures you take in responding to the crisis diminish their incentives, curb their entrepreneurship, and make them feel unsure about the climate in which they are working, the recovery becomes uncertain.

That was Tony Blair.

Then Thomas Donohue, the president of our national Chamber of Commerce, said at a jobs submit about a year and a half ago here in Washington:

The regulatory activity presently going on is so far above and beyond anything we have ever seen in the history of this country, that we are in danger of becoming a government of, by, and for the regulators instead of a government of, by, and for the people.

□ 1030

I thought of these two things when I read a letter recently from one of my constituents who runs a small bank in east Tennessee. He wrote to me. He said:

One of the single greatest needs of small business is access to capital, and much of that small business lending capital is typically provided by America's more than 6,700 community banks. Yet, community banks are by and large being forced to withhold and constrain lending at the time America needs it most. This is largely due to unprecedented onerous regulatory constraints being placed on community banks by Federal bank examiners.

He goes on and says this:

Never in modern history have banks, especially community banks, been under great pressure by banking regulators. Much of that pressure is unprecedented, virtually ignoring or redefining historic standards and definitions of bank examining. Routinely, banks are being required by bank examiners to classify and put into a nonaccrual status loans that are current on their payments. In many cases, this be can far more than half of all of the classified loan assets. This is enormously inconsistent with historic bank examination practices.

And I go on, quoting from this letter:

In most cases, this results in a bank's capital being constrained and consequently may well lead to a forced merger of these banks by the Fed into the larger banks. Despite acknowledgement by the Fed that the two big banks represent a systemic threat to the U.S. and global banking systems, the big banks seemingly are allowed to keep getting bigger.

That is a serious problem. It was the too-big-to-fail banks that got us into the mess that we got into in the first place, and now many of the smallest banks in this country are being forced out of existence or forced to merge. So the big keep getting bigger and the small and the medium-sized ones are having a real struggle to survive.

Finally, this bank who wrote to me said:

If America is going to have economic recovery and jobs depend on it, banks must not only be allowed to lend, but encouraged to lend. Instead, they are largely being constrained from lending with much of that constraint attributable to overly aggressive

bank examination. By and large, most U.S. banks are having to shrink in size in response to the Fed's pressure, which translates into reduced lending.

We have been going through a period of time in which President Bush and his Secretary of the Treasury at the tail end of their administration started saying this and then President Obama and his Secretary of the Treasury then saying it. They have been saying loan, loan, loan, and then the local bank examiners having been saying no, no, no, and it has been holding us back. This country could be booming beyond belief right now, but we're holding it back in so many ways, and we will never come out and have a full and complete recovery unless that atmosphere changes.

I heard a talk this morning by Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana, and he said that our employment rate is less than 64 percent now. He says that is the lowest it's been since the era of stay-at-home moms. He said over a third of adult children are now living at home with their parents, which is way above what it has been in the past. In fact, we have an unemployment rate that is far too high, but our underemployment rate is perhaps even much higher. All across this country you have college graduates who are working as waiters and waitresses in restaurants or in other low-paying jobs because they have gotten college degrees and can't find good jobs because we've sent so many good jobs to other countries in recent years and because our regulatory environment is holding this country back and keeping it from booming as it should be right now.

#### ACCELERATE OUR WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, on February 1 of this year, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said that American forces would step back from a combat role in Afghanistan as early as mid-2013. This is a year faster than had been announced only months previously. He also added that U.S. troops would move into an advise-and-assist role to Afghanistan security forces. I know that most everyone who has joined me on this floor this morning would want a faster transition. To be frank, we wish we could have avoided much of this 10-year nation building altogether. I rise today to express my strong support for the administration's decision to reduce our military footprint on an accelerated timeline.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers, our men and women in uniform, will do and do whatever it is we ask of them. Indeed, the sacrifices that our soldiers and their families have made have been extraordinary. Just this morning, with Congressman DONNELLY, I met a family who lost their dad, and his son is here who was serving with him in Afghani-

stan. There is nothing that we can do to adequately express to them our enormous appreciation for their sacrifice.

If we did not have men and women who, at the call of the Commander in Chief, would put on the uniform and report for duty and do what the Commander in Chief and this Congress authorized, we would not have the United States of America. But the obligation we have to the citizens from our districts that are willing to make that sacrifice is to give them a policy worthy of their willingness to make that sacrifice.

It is time that we do all we can to accelerate our withdrawal from Afghanistan. The reason is this: That's what our national security requires.

There was a very valid reason to go into Afghanistan. It was the home of Osama bin Laden. The Taliban gave him sanctuary. Al Qaeda had free hand. Our policy was right when it was started, but it transformed itself into a nation-building policy where our partner has become a corrupt Afghanistan Government that is unreliable, that is squandering taxpayer money, that is not cooperating with the American military.

The question is: Should the American taxpayer and the American soldier be required to do nation building in Afghanistan, particularly when the threat of terrorism is real, but it is not a nation-centered threat? It is dispersed around the globe. The new American policy of counterterrorism, as opposed to counterinsurgency—that is, going after terrorists where they are as opposed to nation building where some may be—is the right direction for this country to go.

Mr. Speaker, the policy announced by Mr. Panetta to accelerate that withdrawal is overdue and it is timely at this point. I strongly support it and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

#### HIGH-LEVEL NUCLEAR WASTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I come back to the floor again this week to continue to talk about high-level nuclear waste and its location around the country.

This week really saddens me because, in the weeks past when I've identified the U.S. Senators from the appropriate States, usually I would have more in support of moving their high-level nuclear waste out of their State than who wants to vote to keep it in their State. As I go to Connecticut today and the States surrounding Connecticut, it is really amazing how many Senators have gone on record to say, No, it is okay; we will just keep this nuclear waste in our State for 15, 20, 25 more years.

With that, let's look at the options we have here.

The nuclear power plant that I'm addressing today is called Millstone. It is

in Connecticut. I always like to compare it to where the high-level nuclear waste should be, which is underneath a mountain, in a desert in Nevada, at Yucca Mountain, where, in 1987, we passed into law and said Yucca Mountain will be the location for our high-level nuclear waste. It is the law of the land.

How have we done? How much nuclear waste is at Yucca Mountain, this mountain in the desert? We don't have any. We've already spent \$15 billion. The waste would be stored 1,000 feet underground. The waste would be stored 1,000 feet above the water table. The waste would be 100 miles from the nearest body of water, which would be the Colorado River.

□ 1040

Well, let's compare it to Millstone in Connecticut. Right now, Millstone has 1,350 million tons of uranium spent nuclear fuel on site. The waste is stored in pools and in dry casts. The waste is 15 to 20 feet from the water table. It is on Niantic Bay, just off Long Island Sound. Here's a picture. Here's the nuclear power plant; here's the bay. It's right next to the water. And without moving forward on Yucca Mountain, this waste will continue to be stored there 15, 20, 25 more years.

So let's look at the Senators from the surrounding States that border this body of water. We have Senator BLUMENTHAL—new. He said in a campaign interview that he opposed Senator REID's fight to prevent Yucca Mountain, so we put him in the "yes" column. Senator LIEBERMAN voted "no" in 2002, so we put him in the "no" column. Senator LAUTENBERG from New Jersey voted "no" on the Senate Appropriations Committee amendment to restore funding, so we put him in the "no" column. Senator MENENDEZ from New Jersey has been a vocal critic, and so he's in the "no" column. KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, Senator from New York, we have her as undecided. We're kind of waiting for her to take a position. Part of this debate is to at least get Senators on the record somehow to see where they will be on this position.

Senator SCHUMER—obviously fairly close to Connecticut and New York City—he had voted "no" in '02. Senator JACK REED—actually a pretty good friend of mine—from Rhode Island voted "no" in 2002. Senator WHITEHOUSE, a Democrat from Rhode Island, we have as really "undecided." Two "undecided," a whole bunch of "nays," and one "yes."

So how does that do for our totality of where Senators are at this time based upon the information we have? Well, we have 41 Senators who say we need to move high-level nuclear waste out of our State to a desert underneath a mountain. We have 14 that we really have no public record on. We'd like to see the Senate sometime take a vote and figure out where they might be. And we have 15 "nays."